Internal Policy

Changing internal policies can be an excellent way of effecting change in a variety of areas within your organization, including its mission, case practice, supervision, systems integration, and organizational culture. Because you are working within your organization, you may be able to have more control over the outcome than you would in an externally driven approach, such as legislation or regulations. This section will help you plan your policy initiative. It poses important considerations and questions designed to help make key decisions, design effective strategies, and identify next steps in a comprehensive action plan to promote new or revised internal policies.

This section of the Policy Action Guide will walk you through the key aspects of an internal policy initiative, including:

- Understanding the Context and Process
- Who Should Be Involved
  - Establishing Leadership
  - Identifying Partners
- What Needs to Be Done
  - Obtaining Input and Building Support
  - Developing the Policy
  - Planning Outreach and Implementation Strategies
  - Identifying Resources
  - Assessing the Results

> **Internal Policy** – Rules developed by an agency or organization that guide its work, including the mission, goals, roles, responsibilities, use of resources, case practice, human resources, and administration.

Reminder: As you proceed, keep in mind your initial policy objectives and how they apply to an initiative to develop internal policies.

Understanding the Context and Process

Understanding the existing policy environment, as well as the organizational, historical, and current context, will help inform the strategic planning for your policy initiative. Policies at the Federal, State, and local levels are interconnected. It is important to understand how your policy will affect and be affected by current policies. Additionally, your organization, or similar organizations, may have implemented or tried to implement similar internal policies. The lessons learned from those initiatives can be crucial as you proceed with your policy initiative.

Important considerations for understanding the context to support planning include:

- How can existing policies be enhanced or expanded to meet your objectives? Is a new policy needed?
- Are there existing higher level policies (e.g., Federal and State laws), internal policies, or initiatives that support or restrict the development of the proposed internal policy?
- Has this type of policy initiative been attempted previously at your organization? If yes, what can be learned from the previous efforts?
- Are there similar policies in other locations or organizations that you can draw from?
- Are there any data—internal or external—that support your policy?

Please respond to the following:

1. Does your proposed policy change an existing internal policy? If it changes existing policy, what is the current policy?

2. If this policy was attempted previously, what was learned from the previous effort that could help with the current initiative?

3. Describe any research, data, or other policies that support the content of your proposed policy.

4. What other considerations, decisions, or next steps need to be addressed to understand the context of your policy initiative
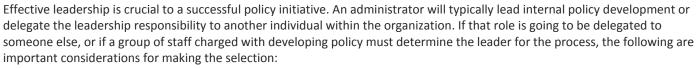
Who Should Be Involved

Determining the right people to be involved, as well as who will serve as the leader, is a key component of any policy initiative. While one individual—generally, a top administrator—may initiate an internal policy effort and direct the identification and recruitment of partners, another individual may emerge to oversee the policy planning or implementation processes.

Establishing Leadership

Effective leadership is crucial to a successful policy initiative. An administrator will typically lead internal policy development or delegate the leadership responsibility to another individual within the organization. If that role is going to be delegated to someone else, or if a group of staff charged with developing policy must determine the leader for the process, the following are important considerations for making the selection:

- Does the proposed leader have a good working relationship with the organization's administrators?
- Does the proposed leader have a background in developing and influencing policy?
- Does existing organizational policy dictate how decisions will be made during this process? If not, how will decisions be made in the group?

Please respond to the following:

1. Who will lead the internal policy initiative?

2. What are the leader's responsibilities?

3. How will decisions be made?

4. What other considerations, decisions, or next steps need to be addressed to establish leadership for your policy initiative?

Resources

- **The Center for Community Leadership**

- **The Community Toolbox** – University of Kansas, Work Group for Community Health and Development. See Part E for information about leadership, management, and group facilitation.

- **Leadership Guidance** (PDF – 239 KB) – American Public Human Services Association, Positioning Public Child Welfare Guidance

- **Leadership in the** *Improving Child Welfare Outcomes through Systems of Care* **Initiative** (PDF – 573 KB) – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau

- **Leadership Resources** – Child Welfare Information Gateway

- **National Child Welfare Leadership Institute**

- **Systems of Care Infrastructure Toolkit: Governance** – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care.

Identifying Partners

When developing or revising an internal policy, you may want to establish a workgroup composed of staff who have content expertise, strategic and analytical thinking skills, and an interest in the issue. It is valuable to have a group that brings diverse perspectives of the organization and how the new policy will affect practices, procedures, and outcomes. You should also consider involving external partners, such as service recipients or other service providers, who may be affected by the new policy. Workgroup members should be able to commit sufficient time to the policy development process.

Important considerations for choosing appropriate partners and workgroup members include:

- Who are the decisionmakers and subject matter experts in the organization that need to be involved in this process?
- Which internal stakeholders (e.g., frontline workers, supervisors, managers) will be required to implement or oversee practices or procedures directed by the proposed policy? How will representatives of these stakeholder groups be involved as partners?
- Which external stakeholders, such as service recipients (e.g., youth, family members) and other organizations or service providers will benefit from or be affected by the proposed policy? How will representatives of these stakeholder groups be involved as partners?
- Have you considered identifying and engaging groups that could oppose your efforts in order to help overcome future barriers?
- What resources, if any, are needed for the policy initiative? What are the resources that each partner can provide (e.g., expertise, staff time)? Where are there gaps? What needs to be done to engage additional partners that can fill gaps by providing needed resources or assistance?
- Has anyone tried to address this issue in the past? Should they be included in this effort?
- How do potential partners work together? Is there a history of collaboration?
- Are there any constraints (e.g., competing demands) that might limit the potential partners' ability to contribute?

Please respond to the following:

1. Potential Partners

Name of individual or organization	Affiliation (if an individual)	Role in the policy initiative

2. What other considerations, decisions, or next steps need to be addressed to identify potential partners for the policy initiative?

Resources

- **Building and Sustaining Child Welfare Partnerships** (PDF – 595 KB) – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care

- **Collaboration** – National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement

- **Community Partnerships: Improving the Response to Child Maltreatment** – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect. Chapter 3 describes how to build and sustain community partnerships, including selecting partners.

- **The Community Toolbox** – University of Kansas, Work Group for Community Health and Development. See Chapter 9 for information about establishing a team to create and run your initiative.

- **Interagency and Cross System Collaboration** – Child Welfare Information Gateway

- **Interagency Collaboration** – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care

- **Promising Practices: Building Collaboration in Systems of Care** (PDF – 372 KB) – University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, Research and Training Center for Children's Mental Health

- **2007 CFSR Toolkit for Youth Involvement: Engaging Youth in the Child and Family Services Review** (PDF – 3,119 KB) – National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement and the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development

What Needs to Be Done

The specific action steps for a policy initiative will vary, depending on several factors, including the issue, the locality, established agency procedures, and your overall strategy. It also may be shaped by the assessment presented earlier in the Policy Action Guide. When working toward developing or revising internal policies, certain general steps should be incorporated:

- Obtaining input and building support
- Developing the policy
- Planning outreach and implementation strategies
- Identifying resources
- Assessing the results.

Obtaining Input and Building Support

There is increasing recognition of the critical importance of incorporating consumer input into systems change and policy development processes. In addition, since the ultimate success of new policies will hinge on acceptance and application at the direct service level, it is essential to gather input from frontline staff. Bringing all stakeholders into the policy process and encouraging buy in early will help contribute to a broader base of support and result in less resistance during implementation.

Important considerations for obtaining input and building support include:

- What strategies will be used to gain buy in and build early support for the internal policy initiative?
- How will input on the proposed policy be gathered (e.g., discussion forums, surveys, representatives serving on a policy workgroup) from key stakeholder groups, including:
  - Staff (e.g., frontline workers, supervisors, managers) who will be required to implement or oversee practices or procedures directed by the new or revised internal policy?
  - Service recipients (e.g., youth, family members) who will benefit from or be affected by the proposed policy?
  - Other organizations or service providers (e.g., community organizations, parent partners) who will benefit from or be affected by the proposed policy?
- Who are the existing champions of the policy initiative who can encourage buy in among their peers? Are there other formal or informal leaders that could be engaged to garner support?

Please respond to the following:

1. Who needs to be contacted about the proposed policy? What approaches will be taken to gather input and garner support?

Stakeholder group	How will their input be collected?

2. What other considerations, decisions, or next steps need to be addressed to obtain input from and build support among key stakeholder groups?

Resources

- **Building Community Support** – Child Welfare Information Gateway

- **The Community Toolbox** – University of Kansas, Work Group for Community Health and Development. See Part B, which includes information about obtaining input from stakeholders; Part C, which provides information about promoting interest in community issues and encouraging the involvement of diverse groups; and Part I, which includes information about using the media to promote a cause.

- **Integrating Systems of Care: Improving Quality of Care for the Most Vulnerable Children and Families** (PDF – 534 KB) – Child Welfare League of America. See Chapter 2 for information about engaging youth, families, and communities in systems integration.

- **Leadership in Systems of Care: Creating and Communicating a Shared Vision** (PDF - 565 KB) – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care

- **Mobilizing Others** – National Alliance to End Homelessness

- **Mobilizing Through Social Media** – National Alliance to End Homelessness

- **Systems of Care Infrastructure Toolkit: Communication** – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care

- **Systems of Care Infrastructure Toolkit: Strategic Planning** – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care

- **Use of Communication in Quality Improvement** – Child Welfare Information Gateway

Developing the Policy

Carefully crafted language is a core component of a policy initiative. The foundation for the draft can draw from stakeholder input, a review of similar policies, and research on best practices. The drafting process should not be rushed. It is better to take your time and be thorough, because the policy will likely affect your own work as well as outcomes for the children and families you serve.

Important considerations for developing the draft include:

- What is your organization's procedure for changing or creating policies?
- Who will draft the policy?
- How will stakeholder input be integrated into the policy development and review process?
- Who will need to approve the policy? What is the review and approval process?
- What are the priority elements of your policy? What are the key processes, procedures, or practices that will be addressed by the policy?

Please respond to the following:

1. Who will develop the draft policy?

2. What is your organization's official process for changing or creating policy, including the review and approval process?

3. What are the key processes, procedures, or practices that will be addressed by the policy?

4. What other considerations, decisions, or next steps need to be addressed to develop the policy?

Resources

- **Governance Boards** – Child Welfare Information Gateway

- **Developing and Implementing Agency Mission and Policy** – Child Welfare Information Gateway

- **An Introduction to the Practice Model Framework: A Working Document Series** (PDF – 171 KB) – National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement and the National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

- **Policy Matters: Setting and Measuring Benchmarks for State Policies** (PDF – 1,541 KB) – Center for the Study of Social Policy

- **PolicyForResults.org** – Provides information on research-based policy strategies to improve the lives of children and families.

- **Systems of Care Infrastructure Toolkit: Policy** – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care

Planning Outreach and Implementation Strategies

Well before a new or revised internal policy is introduced, attention should be paid to planning for outreach and implementation. Outreach focuses on getting the word out about the new policy and communicating its underlying rationale, anticipated benefits, and resultant changes in day-to-day practices. As you begin planning for implementation, you should think about how the new policy will require changes in work processes and skill requirements and how those changes can be facilitated through recruitment, training, coaching and supervision, data systems, and administrative practices. Since policy implementation is a dynamic process, these strategies will likely evolve over time.

Important considerations for developing outreach and implementation strategies include:

- Who needs to be notified about the internal policy because its implementation will affect them (e.g., caseworkers, families, community service providers)? How will they be contacted (e.g., flyers, e-mail, meetings)?
- What obstacles or challenges need to be overcome (e.g., long-standing traditions of working differently) to support effective implementation of the proposed policy? What are the strategies to do so?
- What skills, abilities, or qualifications will be needed by staff to carry out the new policy? Who will require training to effectively understand and build skills to implement the new policy? What types of training or other professional development will be required?
- How will coaching, mentoring, or supervision be used to help staff align day-to-day practices with the new policy? What changes, if any, will be needed in recruitment? In staff performance evaluation?
- What documents (e.g., policy manuals, client forms) will need to be modified to reflect the policy change? What data systems or administrative processes (e.g., monitoring, data collection) will need to be developed or changed?

Please respond to the following:

1. Who needs to be contacted about the finalized policy?

Stakeholder Group	Message to each audience	How will the message be delivered?

2. Who, if anyone, will require training or other professional development about the policy in order to fully implement it

3. What new approaches or modifications will be needed to support effective implementation?

Components	New approaches or modifications
Staffing and recruitment	
Training and other professional development	
Coaching and supervision	
Performance appraisal	
Policy manuals	
Data and reporting systems	
Administrative processes	
Internal policies or regulations	
Multiparty agreements	
Other	

4. What other considerations, decisions, or next steps need to be addressed to plan outreach and implementation strategies?

Resources

- **The Community Toolbox** – University of Kansas, Work Group for Community Health and Development. Chapter about how to institutionalize an initiative.

- **Gaining Buy-in From the Front Line During Times of Change** – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care

- **Implementation Resources Section** – California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse

- **Improving Child Welfare Outcomes Through Systems of Care: Building the Infrastructure: A Guide for Communities** (PDF – 2004 KB) – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care

- **Improving Child Welfare Outcomes Through Systems of Care: Systems of Care Guide: Guide for Strategic Planning** (PDF – 4696 KB) – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care

- **National Implementation Research Network (NIRN)**

- **The Role of Social Marketing in System Reform** – Child Welfare Information Gateway

- **Systems of Care Infrastructure Toolkit: Communication** – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care

- **Systems of Care Infrastructure Toolkit: Training Development and Human Resources** – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care

- **Use of Communication in Quality Improvement** – Child Welfare Information Gateway

Identifying Resources

It is important to think ahead about the monetary and nonmonetary resources that will be required for your policy initiative. Even if funding may not be required to develop the policy, your team may need to determine what funds will be required to support effective implementation. Nonmonetary resources may include tangible items, such as meeting space, as well as the intangibles that each partner brings to the table, such as content area expertise.

Important considerations for identifying and obtaining resources include:

- What resources are needed to support the planning and development or revision of the policy (e.g., staff time, expertise on a specific issue or practice)?
- What resources are needed to support policy implementation (e.g., funds for training, computer hardware or software)? Will additional staff be needed to implement the policy?
- Can your organization's staff develop the policy themselves, or is an outside consultant or facilitator needed?

Please respond to the following:

1. What resources will be required?

Resource	Source	Purpose

2. What other considerations, decisions, or next steps need to be addressed to obtain adequate resources for *developing* the internal policy?

3. What other considerations, decisions, or next steps need to be addressed to obtain adequate resources for *implementing* the internal policy?

Resources

- **Community Partnerships: Improving the Response to Child Maltreatment** – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect. Chapter 3 provides an overview of how to build and sustain a community partnership, including securing funding and other resources.

- **The Community Toolbox** – University of Kansas, Work Group for Community Health and Development. See Part L, which provides information about generating, managing, and sustaining financial resources, and Part M, which provides information about soliciting contributions and in-kind support.

- **Effective Financing Strategies for Systems of Care: Examples from the Field: A Resource Compendium for Developing a Comprehensive Financing Plan** (PDF – 2,809 KB) – University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, Research and Training Center for Children's Mental Health

- **Finding Federal Funding** – The Finance Project

- **Grants.gov** – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- **Management and Supervision Funding** – Child Welfare Information Gateway

- **Maximizing Program Services Through Private Sector Partnerships and Relationships: A Guide for Faith- and Community-Based Service Providers** (PDF – 2,590 KB) – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment

- **Systems of Care Infrastructure Toolkit: Finance** – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care

Assessing the Results

Assessing results can provide vital information for the current policy initiative, as well as future policy efforts. Data can ensure your current initiative is on its intended course, identify needs for new tactics, or help establish successful procedures. Conducting an assessment also may help you communicate the impact and benefits of the policy initiative to stakeholders.

Important considerations for the assessment of policy initiatives include:

- What are the desired goals and objectives for the new policy? What are the anticipated benefits for children and families? For staff?
- How will you monitor adherence to the policy?
- What data can you obtain to track benchmarks and progress toward goals and objectives? Will you be soliciting feedback from all stakeholders? How?
- How will the results be distributed to decision makers and other stakeholders?
- Does one of the team members have skills/expertise in assessment? Does an outside provider need to be brought in to provide assessment support?
- Will you need additional funds for the assessment? Are those funds available?

Please respond to the following:

1. Who will conduct the assessment?

2. What goals or objectives might you assess?

3. How will you obtain data to measure those goals and objectives?

4.   What challenges do you anticipate in assessing the results and how will you attempt to overcome them?

5.   What other considerations, decisions, or next steps need to be addressed to assess the results of the policy initiative?

Resources

- **The Advocacy Evaluation Update Newsletter** – Center for Evaluation Innovation

- **Community Partnerships: Improving the Response to Child Maltreatment** – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect. Chapter 5 discusses how to measure the results of a community partnership.

- **The Community Toolbox** – University of Kansas, Work Group for Community Health and Development. See Part J for information about evaluating community programs and initiatives.

- **Evaluating Advocacy and Policy Change** – Innovation Network

- **Evaluating Program, Practice, and Service Effectiveness** – Child Welfare Information Gateway

- **The Evaluation Exchange: A Periodical on Emerging Strategies in Evaluation** (Spring 2007) (PDF- 1560 KB) – Harvard Graduate School of Education, Harvard Family Research Project

- **A Guide to Measuring Policy and Advocacy** (PDF – 256 KB) – Organizational Research Services (for Annie E. Casey Foundation)

- **Pathfinder: A Practical Guide to Advocacy Evaluation** (PDF – 1148 KB) – Innovation Network

- **The Program Manager's Guide to Evaluation** – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation

- **Systems of Care Infrastructure Toolkit: Continuous Quality Improvement** – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care

Wrap-Up

Carefully thinking through the considerations and responding to the questions in each of the preceding sections of the Action Plan Form can help your policy team systematically plan and set the groundwork for a successful internal policy initiative. Additionally, you can use this information to complete the Next Steps Template, which is at the end of this document. You can share your Action Plan, including the Next Steps Template, with partners and other stakeholders to further develop the decisions and strategies. Furthermore, you can review this document throughout your policy initiative and amend it as needed.

As you proceed with your internal policy initiative, remember that there is not a one-size-fits-all policy process. You should remain flexible in your approach, which will better enable you and your partners to work within an ever-changing social and political environment. Additionally, keep in mind that policy change is only one component in a comprehensive and ongoing change process and needs to be implemented in conjunction with supportive infrastructure elements. Above all, though, remember the ultimate underlying goal in your policy efforts: improving the lives of children and families.

Next Steps Template

This template can be used to develop a step-by-step plan for your policy initiative. Under activities, refer to the key aspects of a policy initiative that are outlined in the Policy Action Guide (e.g., establishing leadership, identifying partners, developing an outreach strategy). For the tasks, review the responses you provided as you went through the Policy Action Guide and think about the next steps required to successfully achieve each activity (e.g., sending an introductory email to stakeholders, coordinating an event). For each task, designate who will be responsible, the anticipated timeframe, and expected outcomes or products. The level of detail is up to you, but more specificity in the planning stage may make the implementation process easier to manage. You can update the last column (Status) as the initiative proceeds in order to help you track progress.

Activity	Task	Person Responsible	Estimated Start Date	Estimated Completion Date	Expected Outcome(s) or Product(s)	Status (e.g., Not Started, In Progress, Completed)